



Debee Tumacki/The Patriot Ledger

The Pilgrims Progress walkers make their way past Plymouth Rock along the waterfront in Plymouth yesterday.

Police, officials pleased with day

By Tamara Race
The Patriot Ledger

PLYMOUTH — Several hundred state and local police, and sheriff's department officers were on duty, but only a dozen or so were in sight yesterday as nearly 1,000 Native Americans and their supporters marched peacefully through town after a rally on Cole's Hill.

Plymouth police Capt. Michael Botieri said the department placed the appropriate number of officers along the parade

route to control traffic and crowds, but kept a low profile. The other officers were on standby. Botieri would not say where the officers waited out the day.

"We're pleased with the way the day went," he said. "We had planned for a peaceful day and things went as smoothly as possible."

After several anxious weeks, town officials, who slogged through the streets with both Pilgrims and Indians, breathed a sigh of relief.

"We achieved our goal for a peaceful

day," Selectmen Chairman Kenneth Tavares said. "We put police in an impossible position last year, and I wanted to make sure it didn't happen again."

"Today is a good sign that we're getting back to previous days when both Pilgrim events and Native American activities were held without problems. It's a good day in Plymouth when groups with differing opinions can express themselves and co-exist peacefully."

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Police and officials pleased with pair of peaceful marches

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Town Manager Eleanor Beth said yesterday's peace was a vindication of the town's settlement with protesters.

"It never would have been peaceful if we hadn't negotiated a settlement with them," she said. "There were too many angry feelings."

Selectman David Rushforth said the agreement needed no vindication. "It was the right thing to do," he said.

In October, selectmen finalized a settlement with 25 United American Indians of New England and supporters charged with various counts of disorderly conduct, unlawful assembly and assault and battery on a police officer after a clash with police last year.

Protesters countered with accusations of police brutality and unlawful arrest and threatened to sue for civil rights violations.

Although no lawsuits were filed, selectmen negotiated a settlement with protesters in exchange for a promise of peace. Protesters also

gave up their right to sue over last year's melee.

The settlement, which included a \$135,000 payment for legal fees and several Native American causes, angered local police, who called it a slap in the face and likened it to extortion.

The settlement was announced in conjunction with prosecutors' agreement to drop charges against protesters in exchange for their retraction of police brutality accusations and an admission that police acted properly and within the law in arresting them last year.

United American Indians of New England co-leader Moonanum James also credited yesterday's peace to the town's willingness to talk and the lack of police presence.

At Memorial Hall, from a bleacher seat above protesters who were waiting in line for food, he assessed the turnout.

"Look at what we have," he said. "We have native people, black people, Asian people, Palestinians, gay, bi, straight. . . . This is what needs to happen. It was a strong day."